

II. AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (cancelled)

2. (cancelled)

3. (cancelled)

4. (new) An apparatus for preparing trim cap material for bending into a desired shape so that when the bent trim cap material is combined with other components it forms a letter or other design for use in a three dimensional sign, said trim cap material comprising a flat elongated body having a reinforced area along one edge, said apparatus comprising:

at least one notcher that removes material from the reinforced area of the trim cap material, the removal of said material being sufficient to facilitate bending of the trim cap material into the desired shape but without penetrating the body of the trim cap stock thereby preventing the formation of cracks during subsequent bending or use of the trim cap material, and

at least one dimpler that creates a dimple in said trim cap material that is visible from both sides of said trim cap material, said dimpler being deployable to indicate both the location and direction of a bend.

5. (new) The apparatus of Claim 4, further comprising at least one shear that cuts the trim cap material at an appropriate position.

6. (new) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the apparatus contains more than one notcher.

7. (new) The apparatus of Claim 6, wherein at least two of the notchers have different angle widths so as to remove different amounts of material from the reinforced area of the trim cap.

8. (new) The apparatus of Claim 7, wherein one of the notchers has an angle of approximately 80 degrees and another of the notchers has an angle of 120 degrees.

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9. (new) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the notcher employs compound levers.

10. (new) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the dimpler can be activated rapidly to produce multiple dimples on the trim cap material adjacent one another, so that different numbers of dimples at a location indicate different bend directions to be made in forming the trim cap into the desired shape.

11. (new) The apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the trim cap material is moved linearly through the apparatus using at least one stepper motor.

12. (new) A method for preparing trim cap material for bending into a desired shape so that when the bent trim cap material is combined with other components it forms a letter or other design for use in a three dimensional sign, said trim cap material comprising a flat elongated body having a reinforced area along one edge, said method comprising:

notching said trim cap material using at least one notcher that removes material from the reinforced area of the trim cap material, the removal of said material being sufficient to facilitate bending the trim cap material into the desired shape but without penetrating the body of the trim cap material thereby preventing the formation of cracks during subsequent bending or use of the trim cap material, and

dimpling said trim cap material to creates a dimple in said trim cap material that is visible from both sides of said trim cap material, said dimpling being applied in a manner to indicate both the location and direction of a bend.

13. (new) The method of Claim 12, further comprising shearing the trim cap at an appropriate position.

14. (new) The method of Claim 12, wherein the notching is conducted using more than one notcher.